

Learning to Hunt

Hosting a hunting-
based outdoor skills
event in your
community



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'dat Dog Won't Hunt

The art of training your hunting dog

Participants interact with dog trainers and their hunting dogs and practice some common commands for training dogs.



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Objectives

Participants shall:

describe the variety of hunting dogs, how they are used, and why they are useful.

discuss how to select a puppy.

give basic training commands.

demonstrate the methods of training dogs to retrieve or flush game.

explain the steps in housebreaking a puppy.

Equipment

Assorted breeds of hunting dogs including retrievers, flushing dogs, pointing dogs and hounds

Dog collars and leashes

Dog whistle

Retrieving "dummies"

Frozen pigeon

Live, wing-clipped pigeon

Dog biscuits

Portable dog kennel

Samples of dog reference and training books

1 copy of Wisconsin DNR's

Training You to Train

Your Dog per participant

(Contact Poynette Game

Farm: 1(608) 635-8120

Station Setup

The instructor of this teaching station should be a hunting dog trainer and/or a member of a local kennel club or the Wisconsin Association of Field Trial Clubs. Ideally, flushing, pointing, retrieving and hound dogs should be used during the demonstrations. An area with a pond, a field and woods is the best location for this demonstration station.

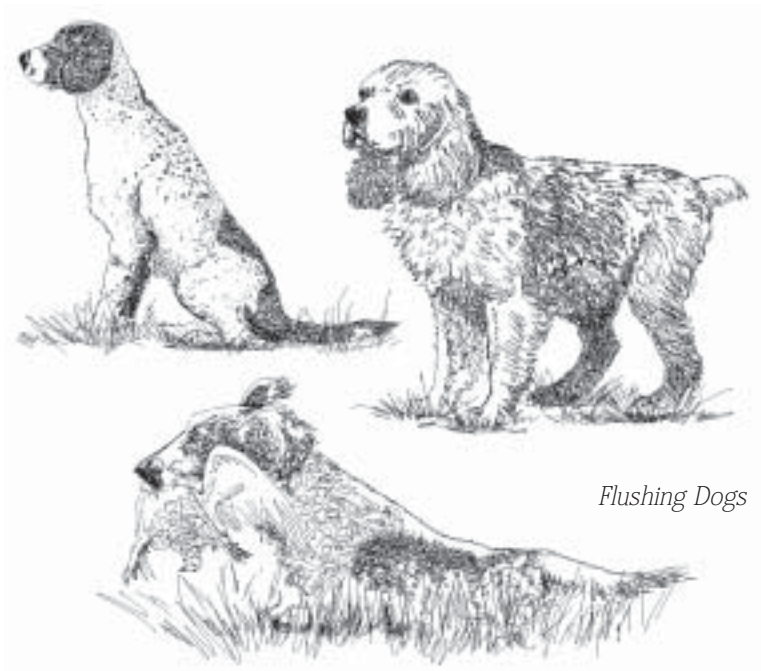
Background Information

For centuries, hunters have used dogs to locate and retrieve upland game and waterfowl. Retrieving downed game is a most important ability of any hunting dog. It is not only convenient for the hunter to have the game retrieved to the hand, but it is also the ethical thing to do. Well-trained hunting dogs reduce the number of wounded birds that may otherwise be lost if the hunter were hunting without a dog. Today, hunting dogs are specialists at their work and can be classed as flushing, retrieving, pointing or hound breeds.



Flushing Dogs: Dogs in this group use body and foot scent to locate upland game birds and put them into flight. Because they flush the birds on contact, they must hunt close to the hunter, within the range of 20 to 30 yards. The most popular flushing dog is the Springer Spaniel. Springer Spaniels perform a number of general hunting duties

on a wide range of game, and so are dubbed an “all-around dog.” They are excellent dogs for hunting ring-necked pheasants, ruffed grouse and woodcock. While Cocker Spaniels were once an excellent sporting dog, many of their hunting instincts have been bred out of them and they now serve a role as one of the most popular family pets.



Flushing Dogs

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Retrievers: These dogs are specialists in retrieving downed birds and are most often used for waterfowl hunting. Their thick fur coats allow them to hunt in water into the coldest of late fall weather. Some hunters use these breeds as flushing dogs as well. While retrievers can perform adequately as upland flushing dogs, they are larger and slower than the Springer Spaniel and do not have the natural quartering instinct. Instead, they tend to depend upon ground scent and trail their game for a longer distance than a true flushing dog. The Labrador Retriever is the most

popular retriever breed, accounting for about 70% of all registered retrievers. They are very intelligent and can be trained to go distances of 100 yards or more to retrieve a downed bird. Since they have excellent temperament, they make great house pets. This combined with their ability to hunt both waterfowl and upland game make Labrador Retrievers the most popular all-around bird dog in the United States. Other popular retrievers include Golden Retriever, Chesapeake, and American Water Spaniel.

Pointing Dogs: Just about every dog has some pointing or stalking instinct. Upon scenting a game bird, a flushing dog may stop momentarily before flushing the bird. Many hunters have trained their flushing dogs to hold point, but holding point is not the only criteria for a pointing dog. Pointers seek only body scent. They rapidly cover the area being hunted, moving constantly, stopping only when birds are located. When a pointer locates a bird, it freezes facing the direction of the scent and remains still until the hunter arrives and flushes the

bird. Because they do not flush the bird, pointers do not need to be restricted to the range of the hunter's gun. Pointers usually range out between 50 to 100 yards in dense cover and up to a half-mile or more in wide-open country. English Pointers, German Shorthaired Pointers, Brittany Spaniels and English Setters, are some of the more popular pointing dogs. Weimaraners, Gordon Setters, German Wirehairs, Vizslas and Red Setters (a cross between Irish Setter and English Setter) are less common examples.



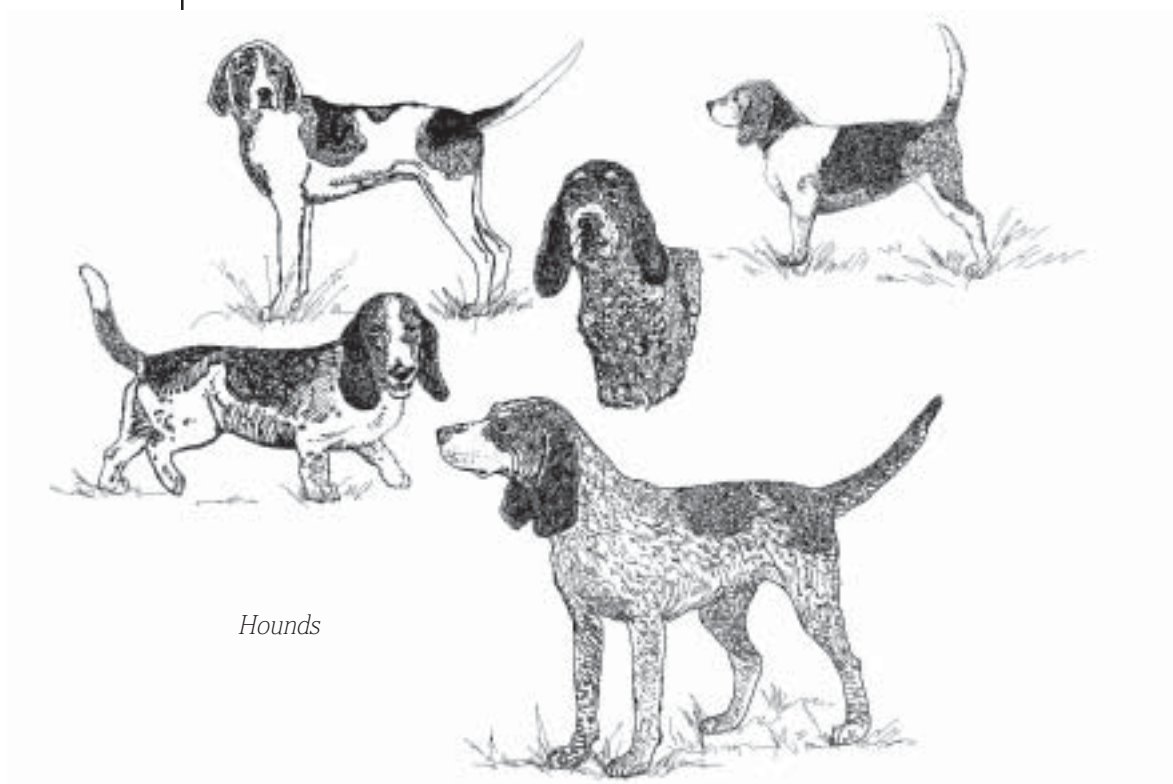
Pointers

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Hounds: These dogs are used for trailing game mammals such as rabbits, raccoons, and bear. They have an excellent sense of smell and can trail mammals sometimes for great distances. The hunter must intercept the trailed animal, or find the spot where the hounds have treed their quarry. Examples of hounds include the Beagle, Blue Tick, Black and Tan, and Redbone.



Hounds

Diseases of Dogs

Distemper is a disease spread by a highly contagious virus. The disease cannot be treated. Prevention through vaccination is the best way of controlling this problem. Annual boosters are recommended.

Hepatitis is a liver disease that can be more successfully treated than distemper. This disease can produce irreversible damage to eyes and liver and can even cause death if it is too far advanced before being treated. Annual booster is recommended.

Leptospirosis (Lepto) is a disease for which dogs should be vaccinated. Even though treatment has a fairly high success rate, dogs may remain carriers for a long time. The disease is transmitted through the carrier animal's urine, so other dogs could be exposed after your dog is apparently over the disease. Many wild animals and farm animals also carry Lepto. These animals come to a water puddle, drink and urinate. If a dog drinks the contaminated water, it may contact Lepto disease. Annual boosters are sufficient unless you live in an area that has a high incidence rate of this disease.

Parainfluenza (Kennel Cough) is normally not a problem for the single dog owner. Kennel Cough is a respiratory disease most prevalent in spring and fall. Some dogs are more susceptible to respiratory diseases than other dogs. Those dogs that are more susceptible and dogs that are exposed to many other dogs at shows, field trails and kennels, should be vaccinated against Parainfluenza. Annual boosters are recommended.

Rabies vaccination is a must for all dogs that encounter any wild animals. This disease is a prime public health concern. Dogs can be vaccinated as young as three months of age, but always consult your veterinarian. Repeat immunization is required every 12 to 36 months depending on the type of vaccine given.

Internal parasites, such as intestinal worms, can be very serious, especially to young dogs. In addition to harming your pup, they also contaminate the pen and your yard. Tapeworms and roundworms are readily visible in your dog's bowel movements. However, hookworms, whipworms and coccidia require a microscope to detect. Take a feces sample with you at the time you have your puppy examined, even if the seller had the pup wormed. Heartworm is a disease transmitted by a mosquito. If not treated, it will eventually damage the dog's heart, lungs, kidneys and liver so that it will impair the dog's health or cause its death. A blood sample is needed to test for the presence of this parasite. Dogs must be checked by blood samples before going on a preventative program.

For more information, read **"Training You to Train Your Dog,"** available through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Game Farm in Poynette, WI.



Basics of Housebreaking

Take your puppy out the first thing when you get up, before you do anything else. Give a command like “go potty” when you are waiting for the puppy to relieve itself.

After your puppy eats a meal, take it out soon afterwards.

Maintain a regular schedule of eating, drinking and elimination for your puppy.

Set a timer for 30 minutes and take your puppy out each time the buzzer rings. As the puppy gets older, you can extend the amount of time between breaks.

Read your puppy's body language. If your puppy is sniffing or circling around, take it outside—pronto!

Don't offer any water to your puppy after 8 p.m. and take it outside just before bedtime.

Never push your puppy's nose in its mistakes.

Never yell at your puppy when it makes a mistake. Praise your puppy when it, on its own, successfully urinates or defecates in a proper place.



Never leave your puppy alone in the house or a room until it is at least one to two years old and can be trusted with its bathroom habits.

Always clean up the areas in your house where your puppy messed. If puppies can smell their mistakes, they may go in that spot again.

Procedure

Introduce yourself, your qualifications as a dog trainer and introduce your dogs by name. If possible, have a puppy along as one of your featured “guests.” Explain what breed class each dog is (e.g., flushing, pointing, retrieving or hound) and describe a little about each class. Discuss why dogs are not just a luxury, but an important tool for many types of hunting. Discuss when hunting with dogs would be useful. What kinds of game animals can be hunted this way?

Be sure that your participants understand that good hunting dogs are very valuable in the retrieval of wild game animals and that they are extensions of the hunter's senses and of the hunter's legs. Discuss how dogs can help or sometimes hinder hunting efforts, enjoyment & ethics. Stress the importance of training dogs, because untrained dogs are often detrimental to the hunt.

Explain that your purpose in this demonstration is not to suggest to your participants which breed is best for them. That is an individual decision. Suggest that they try to observe as many types of dogs as possible before making a decision about which one to buy. They should talk to other dog owners, breeders, local veterinarians and hunters. They

should try to watch the different breeds in action by attending dog shows or field trials. Provide a list of such shows in your region for the coming year. Encourage your participants to read books on the various breeds such as “Just Labs” by Steve Smith, “The Labrador Retriever” by Richard A. Wolters, or “Upland Passage” by Robert F. Jones.

Selecting and Caring for a Puppy. Explain some of the steps your participants should take when selecting a puppy of a particular breed. First and foremost, your participants should consider if they have enough room and enough time for a dog. If your participants live in an apartment or in a city, or lead very busy lives, they should reconsider their thoughts about buying a dog. Hunting dogs tend to be rather large and therefore need lots of space for activity. In addition, all dogs require attention. And hunting dogs require added attention for training. If your participants decide they do have enough space and enough time in their lives, and they would love to own a hunting dog, then they should follow the steps as outlined in “How to Select a Puppy” on the following page.

Now explain to your group that the most ideal time to acquire a

Activity



How to Select a Puppy

Make a list of the breeders in your locality who raise the breed that interests you most.

Get to know each breeder and observe their methods of operation, the cleanliness of their facilities and their breeding stock.

Ask the breeders to what degree they stand behind the pups they sell.

Were the pup's parents x-rayed and examined by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals, Inc. (OFA) for canine hip dysplasia? This disease is not apparent in the pup until four to six months of age...sometimes not until it is 2 years old. A breeder should be able to give the buyer the OFA certification numbers of ancestors upon request.

Ask to see the parents of the pup.

Select a pup from parental stock whose conformation, temperament and approach to hunting most closely matches what you desire.

Make numerous visits to see the litter—don't go just once. Try to match your dog's personality with your own.

Select a pup that is bold and well structured. How does a pup respond in a novel environment, when it is picked up off the floor,

when it is turned over on its back? You want to select one that doesn't behave in the extreme...either crying and whining or kicking and biting.

Feel along the middle of the pup's belly for a small lump that may indicate an umbilical hernia. This defect can be corrected with surgery, but now is the time to come to an understanding as to who will shoulder the expense, you or the breeder.

Look for excessive tearing from one or both eyes. This may be a symptom of eyelid problems.

Check the teeth to make sure that the teeth between the canines fit in such a manner that the lower jaw is behind the upper.

Find out if the puppy has been wormed and if a stool sample has been tested. Ask to see the vet papers.

Decide whether you want to buy a male or a female. Females tend to be less aggressive than male dogs. Males tend to be larger in bone and muscle structure. This decision will also depend on your desire to have your dog bred. If you will not have your dog bred, you should have it neutered or spayed.

puppy is at seven weeks, or 49 days, after birth. If pups are taken earlier than this, they have a more difficult time adjusting to other dogs they encounter later in life. If they are left with their littermates longer than 49 days, they have difficulty adjusting to people. It is fine to buy an older puppy, as long as the breeder has separated it from its mother at seven weeks of age and properly acquainted it to people. However, be prepared to pay about twice the amount you would for a 7-week old puppy.

Discuss with your participants some basics of health care. First, ask how they would go about finding a good veterinarian. They could look in the Yellow Pages, but it is always better to talk to other dog owners for recommendations. Then visit a few offices and decide

for yourself. Is the office clean? Are the employees professional in manner and appearance? Does the veterinarian own/breed the kind of dog you have? Does the veterinarian hunt? Discuss the need for immunizations.

Explain that the nutritional needs of individual dogs vary tremendously. These needs also vary seasonally within one particular dog, depending on how physically active it is. A field trial dog that is worked at least twice weekly plus on weekends will require more food than the average hunting dog during the non-hunting season. Since commercial dog foods vary widely in price and quality, and the analysis on the bag doesn't indicate how easy the food is to digest, it makes sense to feed your dog a good quality, brand-name food.



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Discuss the need for early socialization. Many experts believe that a dog will be a better hunter if it is raised and lives in the house with you and your family as your companion. Why? Life in the home will expose your dog to more people, more circumstances and more dialogs. Your dog will be taught about a broader slice of the world. No dog is more pathetic than a neglected pen-raised dog that cowers and slinks away when brought into strange situations. The neglect is usually not physical neglect, but rather a neglect of the need to be handled, loved, played with and shown the outside world, to be nurtured in a comfortable environment. Spend as much time as possible with your pup each day during this critical, formative period of its life.

Explain that housebreaking a puppy means to teach it to control its bowel and bladder excretory functions. Puppies are too young to be held responsible for not being able to control their bladder or bowel movements. Human babies aren't potty trained until they are two, sometimes three, years old. So don't ask too much of your puppy at one time. By creating opportunities for your puppy to be successful and go in the correct place outside your house, you offer it a chance to show you it can learn.

Housebreaking comes before obedience training if you decide to keep your dog in the house. Refer to the tips for speeding up the housebreaking habit.





Stress the importance that your participants respect their new companion as they would a friend or member of the family. Their new puppy should be considered a member of their household...with certain rights and privileges. Just because a dog is of a hunting breed doesn't mean that it is only a "trained machine" that can be shut away when not in use. It's not a car that can be locked away in a cold, concrete building for hours at a time without playing with it. Dogs need attention like children do. Some of the best-trained dogs are also the best pets at home.

Particularly stress that dogs should never be kept outside in a kennel in severe weather. Ask participants to put themselves in the dog's situation. Ask them how

they'd feel if they were kept outside on a bitter, cold January night with nothing on but a thin fur coat. Or, how would they like to be kept in an unsheltered kennel during a severe thunderstorm?

Ask them to imagine how they would feel if they had to stay in an unshaded concrete and steel kennel wearing a fur coat during a mid-August heat wave.

Dehydration is a condition that occurs when an animal loses body water faster than it can replace it. Since dogs don't perspire, they must pant. Never leave animals unattended in a car parked in a sunny parking lot. A dog left in a closed vehicle on a hot summer day can die within a few minutes. A normal, 45-pound dog requires about a quart of water a day. Excessive heat or exertion, increases this water requirement. Stress to your participants the need to always make sure their dog has plenty of clean water. How would they feel if the only thing they could drink was water that had been standing in a dish for two or three days, complete with leaves, dust, green algae and dog hair? Stress the responsibility of dog owners to rinse and clean the water dish each day and change the water at least twice a day.

Explain that living with a dog in the house will often mean dog hair on the kitchen floor, muddy prints

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on the door or floor rug, the need for throws on furniture, and slurpy messes near the dog's water and food dishes. On the other hand, living with a dog in the house means having a constant source of undying devotion, love and companionship. Most loving dog owners feel that these factors far outweigh the added "mess" associated with keeping a dog in the house. If participants think that having a hunting dog in their house would be too messy, perhaps they should reconsider getting a dog.

Training your puppy

Tell your participants that after their puppy is home and their housebreaking lessons are well underway, they can begin focusing attention on helping their puppy learn some basic verbal cues.



Review each of these training techniques with your participants.

Basic Commands: First, your puppy needs to learn its name. Choose a short name, one or two syllables long. Your puppy should also learn "No!" and "Come!" Use the command "No!" while physically restraining the pup from continuing its unacceptable behavior. Teach the word "Come!" whenever the puppy is coming toward you. Use its name with the command, and bend down as you say it (e.g., "Webster, Come!") Tell your participants that they should not expect or demand complete obedience at this stage of the pup's development.

Retrieving Naturally: The natural way to get your dog to retrieve without coercion or force is the preferred method of dog training. Most puppies can easily be encouraged to retrieve naturally with some daily work at home. All puppies love to put things in their mouths. Take your pup and some items it likes to carry around into some confined and distraction-free area of your home. A great area to start out with is a hallway where your puppy's movements are restricted to a single direction away from you and back again. Hold your puppy, throw the item, release the dog, and encourage your puppy to bring the object back to you. If you make it a short, happy, daily game, your puppy will soon be retrieving.

Next take your puppy to a larger, less-confined room and play the same game. When your puppy retrieves well here, change the objects thrown. Finally, take your puppy into your yard and play the same game. If your puppy decides to keep running around, put a check cord on and gently encourage it to bring the item to you. But don't get rough with the little guy....your puppy may get confused and drop the item it was trying to retrieve. With labs, goldens and other retrievers, take them to a local pond or lake in the summer and introduce them gradually to retrieving in water.

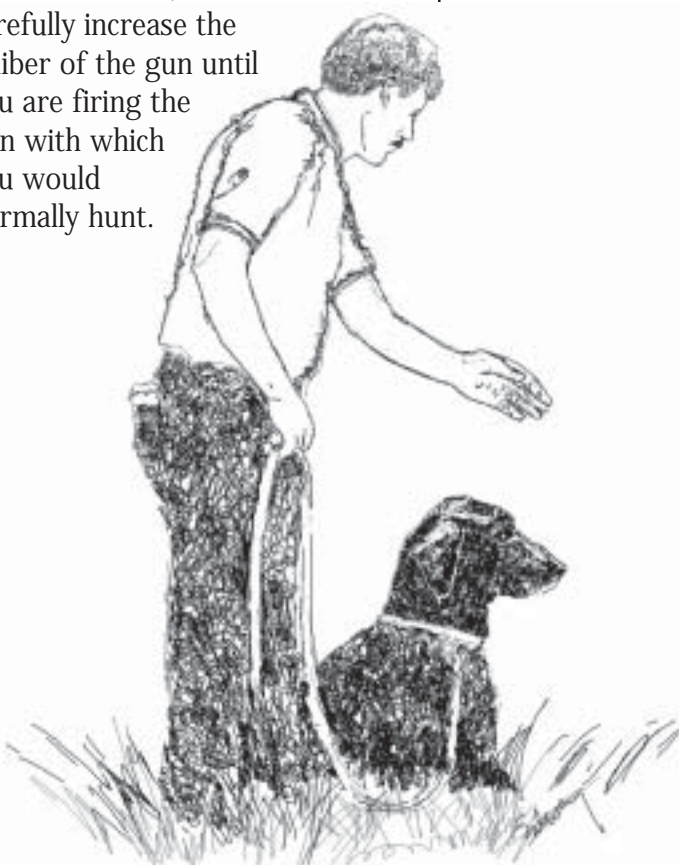
As a demonstration, take one of your retrieving dogs to the water's edge and throw a dummy into the water and give the command to retrieve. Repeat this demonstration several times.

Introducing Puppy to Birds:

After about three or four months of working with your puppy to retrieve objects in your yard, visit a local farmer and ask if you can shoot one of the barn's pigeons. Take the dead pigeon, freeze it whole and use it as a retrieving object and as your pup's first bird. By keeping the pigeon frozen in a plastic bag when not in use, you can use the bird over and over again. Being frozen hard, this object will encourage your puppy to be tender-mouthed when retrieving real game.

Introducing Puppy to the Gun:

As you and your pup venture into the field and it learns to find and chase birds enthusiastically, it is time to introduce it to the gun. Use a very light caliber gun, such as a .22 blank pistol with starter caps. When your pup has found a bird and is vigorously chasing it at quite a distance from you, then fire the blank. If your dog seems confused, startled or returns to you, stop—don't fire again on the next few birds. Let your dog think about it. When it gets to chasing vigorously again, fire once more. If it keeps on chasing or hunting, fire progressively closer as it chases birds. When the dog seems oblivious to this, then carefully increase the caliber of the gun until you are firing the gun with which you would normally hunt.



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Teaching Puppy to Hunt: You can't teach your dog to hunt. Your puppy, through repeated exposure to hunting situations, must teach itself to hunt intelligently. But this comes rather instinctively to most dogs. Repeated exposure to hunting situations and plenty of patience on your part will help your puppy learn the secrets of intelligent hunting.

With retrievers, use an old sock filled with rags when your retriever is a puppy, but when it gets older and bigger, switch to a retrieving dummy. Pick a spot free of distractions. Command your dog to sit and then wave the dummy. Get the dog interested, then throw the dummy a short distance. Hopefully, your dog will rush out to pick it up. If not, pick

it up yourself. Drag it on the ground in front of your dog. Tease and wave it in front of him, making excited noises all the time. Try again. Say "Sit!" Throw your dummy, as the dog picks up the dummy, give the "Come" command. As your dog comes toward you, clap your hands, jump up and down and walk backward away from the dog. With luck, the dog will dash after you. Just as your dog goes by, grab the dummy and praise with "Good Webster!" Repeat three or four times, then quit for the day.

Advanced Commands:

Judiciously use commands for training, handling and obedience. Give them clearly. Keep them short. Use single words or short phrases. Teach commands by repetition and enforcement. Teach your puppy only one command at a time and make sure it fully understands that command before trying to advance to the next one. Dogs vary in intelligence and their training should be as fast, but no faster, than they can learn. You don't expect too much from a child that is in second or third grade, so don't expect too much from a dog that is a year old. His second year is comparable to a person who is approximately fifteen and at that age, the dog will also be testing the rules to see what it can get away with. The dog's third year should be one of growing up and coming of age, meeting



responsibility and settling down. Never lose your temper or hit your dog with your hand.

Voice tone, actions or reactions and consistency are as important as the actual command. Practice good voice tone, steady short commands and control your temper and actions toward your dog. If your dog doesn't respond well to command, it has not been thoroughly trained, or you have not given the command in a proper manner.

Here are some more advanced commands beyond the basic "No!," "Come!" and the dog's name mentioned earlier:

Stay: Used more around the house than in the field. If the pup is in the house as you start out the door and it tries to follow, say "stay!." Use a clear, firm tone, but not as sharp as when you say "no."

Heel: Used while walking to keep your dog at your side, its head even with your lead knee.

All Right or O.K.: This command tells your dog that its training session is over or that it can do anything it wants to do. Give your dog a pat or two and say "all right" in a clear, warm and caring, happy voice.

Whoa: This is the most important command for a pointing dog. This command should stop a dog in its tracks. It means cease all movement and remain in a rigid, standing position.

Sit: This is an important command for a retriever. Attach a leash to the dog's collar for control and command "Sit!" while gently pushing down on the dog's hindquarters. Be firm, but not forceful. Praise your dog when it sits.

Kennel: This is the command to use for getting your dog into the house, the car or the back of a pick up truck. When approaching the car, command your dog to "Sit!" Open the door and command "Kennel."

Down: This is a valuable command for a duck dog. When you want your dog to lie flat on its belly, use this command. First give the command "Sit." Then give the command "Down." Slowly pull its front legs out so your dog is now flat on the ground. Command "Stay" to keep him in the down position.

Steady to the Fall: Making your retrieving dog steady means that he will retrieve only on your command. This training is needed if you want



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Teach young hunters that their dog is their hunting partner. And just as they should respect and love their human hunting partners, they need to love and respect their canine companions. Hitting, yelling and shocking their friend is not an acceptable or humane way to train their dog. If the kids learn to treat their puppy in the same manner they wish to be treated, then their canine buddy will be their faithful companion for life.

to avoid having to continually call your duck dog back to the blind when it charges out every time you shoot your gun. To steady your dog, put a leash around its neck. Have your dog heel and sit. Ask a helper to shoot a blank gun and toss the dummy. Your dog will try to break, but command him to stay while keeping him restrained with your leash. Continue this routine, never allowing your dog to break. Over a period of weeks, gradually release the pressure on the leash as your helper throws the dummy. Always have a firm grip on the leash, in case your dog breaks. If he breaks, hang on the leash and jerk him back as he hits the end of the leash. Set

your dog back in place and command "Stay." If your dog breaks on a retrieve, have your helper pick up the dummy before the dog can get it. Your dog needs to get the message that he only gets to retrieve when he does everything correctly.

When you feel confident that your dog stays steady using a dummy, you may wish to substitute a dead bird or a live, wing-clipped bird for the retrieving dummy. Expect a setback in training. Most dogs that are quite steady when a dummy is thrown break wildly when a live bird is substituted for a dummy. The procedures for training are exactly those that you use with a dummy. Demonstrate this with your group.

Back: This command is normally used to send your dog for the retrieve. With your dog heeling on your left side, place your left hand even with his head and command "Back!" as you release him for the retrieve.

As a summary activity, assign a hunting situation that uses dogs. Let your participants pick a breed, discuss training, and explain why they made their selection. If dogs are available, have participants practice with the dogs.




End of Teaching Station

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